

No Shame in Bizjets

'Time machines' offer efficiency, exports and jobs

The headline read, "Chastised Citigroup Grounds Plan for New Plane." You could feel the indignation and hear the tongues clucking across the country. I wonder if any of those so offended actually read the article, particularly the part that said, "The bank said the new plane would cut its costs and that it was financing the purchase by selling older jets." It seems that, thanks primarily to our top auto executives, the mention of an airplane causes everyone to ignore sound business principles and hiss as if they have seen the villain in an old movie. Of course, the media is only repeating what has recently become politically correct to espouse — using business aircraft is shameful and wasteful. It would be humorous if it weren't so uninformed, incredibly contrary to the actions that are required to get us out of this economic mess, and just plane (excuse the use of the word) inaccurate.

In his inaugural address, President Obama told the world that we will not apologize for our prosperity and our way of life. That prosperity is owed to the success of our capitalist system. Without apologies, the business aircraft is nothing more or less than a powerful "capitalist tool." This is a capitalist society, and the airplane is a tool, a resource, an asset, a form of transportation. It provides many benefits for its users: safety, security, convenience, comfort and, sometimes luxury. **But most of all the business jet is a time machine that enables people to be in more places, and to get more accomplished, in a shorter period of time.** In business, where time and money are crucial — and often synonymous — it has unquestionable value. To disregard this fact, whether through ignorance or political correctness, forfeits potential efficiency and a competitive edge that is desperately needed right now. **We cannot afford it.**

And speaking of affording it, yes, business jets are very expensive. So are robotized assembly lines in the auto industry, oil-drilling platforms in the energy industry and medical equipment in hospitals. Like airplanes, these are all systems that require significant investment and greatly improve the performance of a task. On a personal level, our computers and Blackberries are investments we make to save time and improve our own productivity. But, are there ways other than business aircraft to get from point A to point B? Well, in the case of some remote areas, the answer is no. The United States has 20,000 airports, but less than 500 are served by commercial airlines. In fairness though, the answer is often yes; however, it is here that the value of time enables the bizjet to have an economic advantage.

By calculating the cost of the time spent getting from point A to B, the alternatives, especially the airlines, end up being *more* expensive. And often, the trip is from A to B to C to D and back to A in a single day — an itinerary that cannot be physically achieved by other forms of transportation. The cost/value calculation can actually be precisely accomplished. The National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) has developed a software program that does just that by using your travel profile and the value of your time. It will tell you, unequivocally, which alternative is more expensive. As you might expect, the more varied the destinations, the more soundly the business jet beats the alternatives. And, when the occupants are decision makers, responsible for thousands of people and millions of dollars, their improved productivity further tilts the result in favor of using business aircraft.



Now, let's talk about the business aircraft industry. Not only are its products an indispensable efficiency tool for American industry, but it also provides significant innovation, exports and *jobs*. It would seem that because aviation is not in line for a bailout, it is ignored — but even worse, has now become the whipping boy for uninformed politicians and the media. This industry contributes more than \$150 billion to our economy. It supports 1,265,000 jobs and is among the few U.S. industries that consistently provides positive net export dollars. Yet, Washington tries to forbid loan recipients from even *using* business jets and the media offers almost daily attack articles like the one whose headline begins my discussion. With “representatives” and friends like these, this industry doesn't need enemies. Why should the legitimate capital expenditure to purchase a business jet be any less desirable for our economy than that of a car or truck, (or locomotive, or ship, or airliner)? It should not and it is not. And, by the way, for the past few years, most business jets have been sold outside of the United States and many of those are bought by people in economically emerging countries that are recognizing the competitive advantage of this resource in a global economy.

Let us not allow the inept performance of a few executives in the automotive and financial industries to dictate the reputation and use of one of technology's finest contributions. We shouldn't permit previous bad decisions and misinformation to prevent us from using a resource that exemplifies efficiency and saves both time and money. These aircraft can be effectively used by big business — and also by medium-sized businesses, small businesses, ministers, athletes, artists and yes, even politicians. **We should not be ashamed of owning, leasing or chartering a business aircraft. We should be eager to support an industry that contributes to our economy in so many ways.** The financially responsible use of this “time machine” improves business performance, sustains/creates jobs, and contributes greatly to international exports. Isn't that exactly what we need to get our economy moving again? Shouldn't that make us proud? Shouldn't we stand up and let everyone know it? I certainly will.

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